

INSPECTION REPORT

Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency

21 January 2002



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Grading

Inspectors use a seven-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of learning sessions. The descriptors for the seven grades are:

- *grade 1 - excellent*
- *grade 2 - very good*
- *grade 3 - good*
- *grade 4 - satisfactory*
- *grade 5 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 6 - poor*
- *grade 7 - very poor.*

Inspectors use a five-point scale to summarise their judgements about the quality of provision in occupational/curriculum areas and in New Deal options. The same scale is used to describe the quality of leadership and management, which includes quality assurance and equality of opportunity. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- *grade 1 - outstanding*
- *grade 2 - good*
- *grade 3 - satisfactory*
- *grade 4 - unsatisfactory*
- *grade 5 - very weak.*

The two grading scales relate to each other as follows:

SEVEN-POINT SCALE	FIVE-POINT SCALE
grade 1	grade 1
grade 2	
grade 3	grade 2
grade 4	grade 3
grade 5	grade 4
grade 6	grade 5
grade 7	

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- work-based training for all people over 16
- provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- the University for Industry's **learnirect** provision
- adult and community learning
- training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Inadequate provision

A provider's provision will normally be deemed to be less than adequate where

- one third or more of published grades for occupational/curriculum areas and New Deal options are judged less than satisfactory, or
- leadership and management are judged to be less than satisfactory

The final decision as to whether the provision is inadequate rests with the Chief Inspector of Adult Learning. The overall judgement as to whether the provision is adequate or inadequate is included in the summary section of the inspection report.

SUMMARY

The provider

Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency was formed in 1983 and became a limited company in 1993, serving the Greater Nottinghamshire area. It provides work-based learning for 145 learners following modern apprenticeship programmes and national vocational qualifications (NVQs) in hairdressing.

Overall judgement

The overall quality of the provision is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving it. More specifically, the quality of work-based learning in hairdressing is unsatisfactory. Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency's leadership and management are satisfactory, as are equal opportunities and quality assurance issues.

GRADES

Leadership and management	3
Contributory grades:	
Equality of opportunity	3
Quality assurance	3

Hairdressing & beauty therapy	4
Contributory grades:	
Work-based learning for young people	4

KEY STRENGTHS

- good management procedures to meet the additional needs of learners
- good teaching
- comprehensive individual training programmes
- good internal communications
- effective use of management information systems

KEY WEAKNESSES

- poor retention rates
- poor management of on-the-job training
- poor use of target-setting
- no overall review of modern apprenticeship programmes
- insufficiently thorough self-assessment
- insufficient use of assessment in the workplace

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better linking of the quality assurance cycle to self-assessment

THE INSPECTION

1. A team of four inspectors spent a total of 16 days at Nottingham Hairdressing Training Agency (NHTA) during January 2002. Inspectors visited 17 work placements and interviewed 17 employers and 46 learners. All the staff from NHTA were observed or interviewed. Inspectors observed training, assessment and progress review sessions and graded seven training sessions. They examined a range of documents including policies and procedures, the minutes of meetings, the business plan, promotional literature and awarding body reports, 14 portfolios and 22 individual learning plans. They studied the previous inspection report, the self-assessment report produced in August 2001 and the subsequent development plan.

Grades awarded to learning sessions

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Hairdressing & beauty therapy	0	2	4	1	0	0	0	7
Total	0	2	4	1	0	0	0	7

THE PROVIDER AS A WHOLE

Context

2. NHTA was formed in 1983 to provide work-based learning in hairdressing to young people in the Greater Nottingham conurbation. NHTA currently has 102 work-placement employers, 85 within the city and the remainder in the surrounding area. There are two company directors, nine full-time and four part-time staff. The directors have overall responsibility for finance, administration and training development. The main premises contain a training centre and house the administrative team. NHTA also has a commercial salon and a further training centre in the centre of Nottingham. There are 145 learners, who all attend the training centres for off-the-job training and assessment. NHTA receives funding from Nottinghamshire Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

3. In 2000, the population of Nottingham was 282,900 and in Nottinghamshire as a whole it was 748,300. According to the 1991 census, 10.8 per cent of the community in Nottingham were from minority ethnic groups, the figure for the county as a whole was 1.5 per cent. The proportion of school leavers gaining five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above in 2001 was 30 per cent in Nottingham, 46 per cent in Nottinghamshire and 47.9 per cent in England.

4. The principal manufacturing industries in the Nottingham area are pharmaceuticals, clothing and tobacco products. The mining and construction industries have declined over the past decade, and the financial and service sectors have grown. Although the city is experiencing rapid economic growth and development, a large proportion of its population is still economically disadvantaged. Nottingham is the 15th most deprived district in England. The 1991 census figures give a proportion of 10.8 and 1.5 per cent, respectively, for minority ethnic groups in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The unemployment rate in the city is 4.1 per cent and in Nottinghamshire it is 3.7 per cent. The national rate is 2.9 per cent.

Work-based learning for young people

5. Off-the-job training is well planned. The learners at NHTA receive good training. Learners are involved in monitoring their own progress and evaluating their training. There are good management procedures to meet the additional needs of learners. Most training and assessment takes place in the training centres, but not enough assessment is done in the workplace. Although learners have comprehensive individual learning plans, these focus on training within the centre and are not always linked with off-the-job training. Some learners make slow progress.

6. There are poor retention rates on work-based learning programmes. Significant numbers of modern apprentices have been leaving the training programme before achieving their modern apprenticeship framework. Some learners at level 2 and level 3 NVQ are progressing slowly, taking two years to achieve the NVQ. Some are on programmes for six months before achieving any NVQ units.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Grade 3

7. NHTA has two directors and employs 13 staff. One director is responsible for finance and administration, and the other for training and development. The staff include a work-placement development officer, an operations and quality manager, two administrators, an internal verifier, a key skills co-ordinator, a support tutor and tutor co-ordinators. NHTA's equal opportunities policy is included in its mission statement. NHTA produced its first self-assessment report in July 1998. This was updated in line with the Common Inspection Framework in August 2001.

STRENGTHS

- good management procedures to meet the additional needs of learners
- effective use of management information systems
- good staff development linked to training
- good management of health and safety in the workplace
- good internal communications
- comprehensive and regularly updated equal opportunities policy
- good promotion of training to under-represented groups
- good evaluation of training by learners
- good staff observation scheme

WEAKNESSES

- poor management of on-the-job training
- poor use of target-setting
- insufficient promotion of equal opportunities with employers
- no overall review of modern apprenticeship programmes
- insufficiently thorough self-assessment process
- underdeveloped system for feedback from employers

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- better evaluation of learners' understanding of equal opportunities following induction
- fully implement the anti-harassment policy
- better linking of the quality assurance cycle to self-assessment
- update amended quality assurance procedures
- more up-to-date training in equal opportunities

8. Learners may enrol with NHTA at any time during the year. There is no entry requirement. At induction, NHTA staff use tests and questionnaires to find out what

additional support, learners will need. Schools, social services and the careers service provide information on learners' social, emotional and learning difficulties. Learners speak highly of the individual support provided. As well as having individual tutorials and meetings, learners can call in to or telephone the training centre if they have any problems, and in some cases they are able to contact their trainers out of hours. For learners who start their programmes after the beginning of the year, or those who need to go over a particular topic again, there are revision sessions. NHTA is responsive to the needs of learners. For example, basic skills training sessions were recently introduced at the request of learners. The director of training and NHTA staff take prompt action on problems as they arise.

9. Management information systems are used effectively at NHTA. The company correctly identified this as a strength in the self-assessment report. Individuals and groups of learners are monitored. The system highlights those who need additional support. It records learners' attendance. NHTA produces a spreadsheet with details of learners' prior achievements and the results of their initial assessments in key skills. This is available to tutors. The management information system is used to plan dates for learners' progress reviews and ensure that learners are registered with awarding bodies on time. It is also used to match learners with the most suitable salons for work placements or employment. NHTA keeps a list of school leavers who are potential hairdressing learners and sends them details of opportunities for work-based learning. NHTA analyses data on early leavers and their destinations. It found that some learners had left the programme early because they were allergic to the chemicals used in hairdressing. Learners are now monitored and provided with rubber gloves and barrier creams.

10. NHTA provides good staff appraisal and development. All staff are qualified to the appropriate occupational standards. All the training staff have teaching and assessor qualifications and one member of the support staff is working towards a teaching qualification. Staff are observed during the year, and their appraisals link their training needs and personal development to NHTA's business plan. A clear and helpful written summary of their appraisal is given to the individual. NHTA actively helps its staff to gain qualifications, by giving them time to study during working hours and providing help with coursework.

11. The management of health and safety in the workplace is good. Employers have up-to-date policies and procedures which meet the standards set down by the Health and Safety Executive. Appropriately qualified NHTA staff make annual visits to salons to monitor health and safety compliance. Any shortcomings are identified and NHTA monitors the remedial actions. Risk assessments are carried out on each learner to ensure that they are working safely.

12. NHTA communicates with its staff through a structured timetable of meetings. The meetings have set agendas and detailed minutes are taken. Action points include details of those people responsible for carrying them out. The minutes emphasise NHTA's strong commitment to learning. There is a system for colour-coding and grading

documents in order to prioritise and monitor action. Inspectors agreed with NHTA's self-assessment report that the internal communication system is a strength.

13. There is poor management of on-the-job training. Some employers are not sufficiently committed to work-based learning. In some salons, learners are given regular training sessions by identified staff members, while in others no formal training is offered. Some salons do not provide enough models for learners to work on. NHTA has not set standards for work placements. There is no system to ensure that employers are involved in learners' progress reviews or to provide on-the-job training. Some progress reviews have not been carried out within the time limit specified by the local LSC. Few employers understand the need for learners to gather evidence from the workplace for NVOs and key skills qualifications. There is not enough assessment in the workplace, even though some of the employers have assessor qualifications. This was identified as a key weakness in the inspection carried out by the Training Standards Council (TSC) in November 1998.

14 NHTA does not set retention and achievement targets as part of its strategic planning. Although it works intensively with individual learners to meet their needs, the retention rate is poor. NHTA does not set targets for recruitment from under-represented groups. There are no procedures to ensure that realistic targets are set for learners at progress reviews. These weaknesses have not been identified in the self-assessment report.

Equality of opportunity

Contributory grade 3

15. NHTA has a comprehensive equal opportunities policy which is regularly updated. Staff discuss equality of opportunity with learners at their induction, but mainly in the context of NHTA's support for learners' additional needs. Learners' progress reviews also concentrate on their additional needs off the job, and on their treatment by employers. There is insufficient evaluation of learners' understanding of the wider issues of equal opportunities. Data on the recruitment, retention and achievements of under-represented groups are collected. The data are analysed and monitored effectively.

16. NHTA actively promotes its training programme to under-represented groups. NHTA representatives attend careers events at an Afro-Caribbean community centre and hold mock interviews for pupils in local schools. Staff attend careers events to explain work-based learning to prospective learners. Local youth club members have visited the training centre to gain insights into hairdressing as a career and to act as models for the learners. The staff have contributed to publicity materials for hairdressing which used young men as role models. NHTA monitor their recruitment from under-represented groups. The proportion of NHTA's learners from under-represented groups does not currently reflect the proportion in the local community.

17. There is insufficient promotion of equal opportunities to employers. Before employers are included in the work-based training programme they are given a copy of NHTA's equal opportunities policy. They must confirm in writing that they have read the policy and will actively promote its principles in the workplace. Employers are not involved in reinforcing learners' understanding of equal opportunities at progress reviews. In its self-assessment report, NHTA has identified the promotion of equal opportunities to employers as an area in need of improvement.

18. Insufficient recent staff training on equal opportunities has been identified as a weakness by NHTA, but no action has yet been taken to remedy it. Staff do not keep up to date with recent changes in legislation or share ideas for reinforcing the wider aspects of equal opportunities with learners. NHTA has recently written a policy for dealing with anti-bullying and harassment. It has not yet been implemented.

Quality assurance

Contributory grade 3

19. NHTA has a quality assurance policy and manual. It includes effective procedures for obtaining feedback from learners. Learners complete annual evaluative questionnaires. These questionnaires are objective and cover the quality of training, including curriculum content and whether learners are given enough time to complete units. Learners are encouraged to suggest areas for improvement. There is also feedback from learners at the end of individual NVQ units. Careful analysis of these results has led to improvements in areas such as key skills training and training resources. NHTA produces standardised learning materials to help ensure consistency between trainers.

20. NHTA has one main internal verifier, although four other members of staff are also qualified. There is an annual schedule for verifying different assessment methods and sampling learners' portfolios of evidence. The internal verifier gives thorough, written feedback, which is well organised and cross-referenced. The verification procedures meet the requirements of awarding bodies.

21. As part of its quality assurance procedures, one of NHTA's directors observes staff as they train, review and assess learners. The quality of their preparation for training sessions is monitored, as is the effectiveness of the training, and feedback is sought from learners. However, some of the problems revealed by the observations have not been corrected.

22. NHTA's quality assurance procedures do not include an overall review of their programmes to pool information. There are no specific improvement targets set for retention or achievement rates. The annual performance data have not been analysed to compare performance year-on-year or to identify trends. Information is collected on why learners leave the programmes early, but this is not used effectively as part of the quality assurance cycle.

23. The first evaluation questionnaires for several years were recently sent to employers. Early returns show that some employers are interested in taking part in employer focus groups. Many of NHTA's quality assurance procedures are documented, but they need updating. Some are several years old and include hand-written amendments.

24. Although the self-assessment process involves all staff, it is not adequately linked to the quality assurance procedures. For example, it does not make sufficient reference to feedback obtained from learners or the observations of training. It is not sufficiently self-critical. Key weaknesses such as the slow progress of learners, poor retention rates, low achievement rates and poor links between on- and off-the-job training were not recognised. Self-assessed grades were too high in all cases. Action-planning from the previous TSC inspection and the self-assessment reports has not been effective in improving the quality of training.

Good Practice

NHTA has a 'Hall of Fame' where learners' achievements are celebrated. Photographs of learners are displayed, together with details of their successes, which include good attendance records and increased motivation.

Poor Practice

An NHTA staff member observing a training session had reported that hairdressing equipment was not always being sterilised. Despite this, there has not been a thorough check of all the training salons to ensure that sufficient sterilising equipment is available, or that it is used.

AREAS OF LEARNING

Hairdressing & beauty therapy

Grade 4

Programmes inspected	Number of learners	Contributory grade
Work-based learning for young people	145	4

25. NHTA offers modern apprenticeships and NVQs in hairdressing to young people in the Nottingham area. The programmes are planned so that most learners will complete the foundation modern apprenticeship in two years and the advanced modern apprenticeship in three years. There are currently 39 advanced modern apprentices, and 106 foundation modern apprentices. Eight of the learners are men. All learners are employed. There are 102 workplaces, ranging from small to medium-sized businesses. Learners may join the programme at any time of the year, but most start in the summer. Learners are recruited through the careers service, their employers or directly by application to NHTA. NHTA organises interviews for learners with prospective employers. The two-day induction for learners covers the course requirements for NVQ and key skills qualifications, appeals procedures, health and safety and equal opportunities issues. Learners are given an initial assessment of their basic and key skills during induction which is used to develop their individual learning plans. Any additional learning needs are identified and support measures are put in place. NHTA operates from two sites, both with training facilities. The site in the centre of Nottingham includes a commercial hairdressing salon. Most learners attend the training centres for one day every two weeks, for training in background knowledge and practical skills, and portfolio-building. Learners on level 2 NVQs attend for 12 additional days in their second year for key skills training. The training centre operates on four days a week, offering a choice of days for salons with more than one learner. Most assessment takes place at the training centres. All NHTA staff have, or are working towards, appropriate training and assessment qualifications.

NOTTINGHAM HAIRDRESSING TRAINING AGENCY

The following tables show the achievement and retention rates available up to the time of the inspection.

Work-based learning for young people										
Foundation modern apprenticeships (FMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			59		100		80		59	
Still in training			0	0	22	22	42	52	42	71
FMA framework completed			8	14	41	41	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			30	51	46	46	2	3	0	0
Left without completing the framework			51	86	37	37	38	47	17	29

Work-based learning for young people										
Advanced modern apprenticeships (AMA)										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			51		20		48		10	
Still in training			2	4	4	20	24	50	9	90
AMA framework completed			9	18	8	40	0	0	0	0
NVQ level 2 completed			22	43	6	30	20	42	0	0
NVQ level 3 completed			9	18	5	25	0	0	0	0
Left without completing the framework			40	78	8	40	24	50	1	10

NVQ Training										
NVQ Training										
	1997-98		1998-99		1999-2000		2000-01		2001-02	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Number that started			13		2		3			
Still in training			0	0	0	0	0	0		
Individual learning plan completed			3	23	2	100	2	67		
Left without completing individual learning plan			10	77	0	0	1	33		
NVQ level 1 completed			3	23	0	0	1	33		
NVQ level 2 completed			0	0	2	100	1	33		
NVQ level 3 completed			1	8	0	0	0	0		
NVQ level 4 completed			0	0	0	0	0	0		

STRENGTHS

- particularly good off-the-job training
- good progress monitoring system involving learners
- comprehensive individual training programmes
- good range of salons matched to learners' needs

WEAKNESSES

- poor retention rates
- insufficient realistic target-setting at progress reviews
- insufficient use of assessment in the workplace
- slow progress for some learners
- poor key skills training provision

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- more regular verification of NVQ units

26. Training is of a high standard. The high ratio of trainers to learners ensures individual attention during off-the-job training. Comprehensive learning packs and good quality handouts have been designed by NHTA staff for each session. The packs include technical information on each element within a unit, details of evidence required, important facts to remember and revision notes on essential knowledge. The sessions are lively and informative, and open discussion is encouraged. Learners' interest is maintained and a wide range of activities reinforces learning. Questionnaires are used to confirm knowledge. Staff are all well qualified and commercially experienced.

27. Learners receive good written feedback on assignments. This helps them to complete work to a satisfactory standard. Effective monitoring clearly shows all the units and elements to be achieved. Learners are aware of the units they have completed and what they still need to achieve. As they complete a piece of work or a practical observation, they highlight the unit on a monitoring sheet. This system clearly shows progress and motivates learners.

28. NHTA provides comprehensive individual training programmes. Learners can start their training at different times of the year and still gain the background knowledge required before they begin their practical training. This gives them the chance to catch up with those who started the programme at an earlier point in the year. Most catch up in four to six weeks. During this time any additional learning needs are identified. All learners are then offered additional basic skills sessions, to enable them to progress and

achieve the qualification. This was identified as strength in the self-assessment report.

29. Most of the learners work in good-quality, well-resourced salons with modern equipment. The salons encourage high standards of technical skill and professionalism. Some of the learners work on models during weekly, supervised, training sessions in their salons. Learners use a wide range of quality commercial products during their salon training sessions. Some work placements offer learners the opportunity to attend workshops and courses run by leading manufacturers of hairdressing products. Learners report that this develops their skills and motivation, and builds their self-confidence. At the start of their training programme, all learners are given a choice of three work-placement salons. This gives them a chance to decide what kind of salon they want to work in.

30. Retention rates on modern apprenticeship programmes are poor. Since 1998, 50 per cent of all modern apprentices have left the programme without completing their modern apprenticeship framework. The proportion of foundation modern apprentices leaving early ranged from 86 per cent in 1998-99 to 37 per cent in 1999-2000. The proportion of advanced modern apprentices who left without completing their modern apprenticeship framework ranged from 78 per cent in 1998-99 to 40 per cent in 1999-2000.

31. Reviews of learners' progress are ineffective. The reviews take place quarterly in the workplace. They are not used to set realistic targets or identify training opportunities. They do not take account of the additional support which learners may need in the workplace. Most progress reviews do not include comments from the employer, or details of the training that has taken place in the salon. The links between on- and off-the-job training are inadequate. Learners and employers do not fully understand the different types of workplace evidence that can be used to demonstrate competences. Most employers only know what training has been given off the job by talking informally to the learner. This was not recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

32. There is insufficient assessment of learners in the workplace. Most assessments take place at NHTA training centres, during the learners' designated training sessions. Although some salon owners and managers are qualified assessors they are not effectively used for work-based assessment. Training staff from NHTA rarely visit the learners in the salons to observe and assess practical work. Most learners are not aware that they can be assessed on some NVQ units and key skills in the workplace. This was identified in the self-assessment report as a weakness. Learners and employers are not aware of the importance of key skills qualifications, or their relationship with the rest of the programmes. Prior learning and experience are not accredited.

33. Some learners on both level 2 and level 3 NVQ programmes make slow progress. In most cases, they take two years to achieve their hairdressing qualification. Some learners have been on their programme for more than six months without achieving non-technical units such as shampooing and reception. There is a shortage of models at the training centre and in some salons. NHTA do not consistently encourage employers to

record evidence of competences demonstrated in their salons. Links between on-and-off-the-job training are established at some salons, but a significant number of learners do not receive regular, planned, on-the-job training linked to training off the job. This was not recognised as a weakness in the self-assessment report.

34. Key skills training does not begin early enough in the training programme. In many cases, key skills are not being taught from the beginning of the hairdressing qualification. Often, employers and learners are unaware that key skills qualifications are an integral part of the modern apprenticeship framework. Some employers have very little understanding of how key skills should be taught. Learners do not understand the key skills units and their content. They do not actively collect evidence for their key skills units at the same time as evidence for their hairdressing units.

35. The completed NVQ units are not internally verified until the qualification has been completed. If there are discrepancies identified at this stage the learner will be required to redo work they had assumed to be completed.

Good Practice

Extra trainers are available to provide individual tuition to learners who miss sessions or who are falling behind because of difficulties in understanding information. Sessions take place on a weekly basis and are valued by learners.